



Wisconsin Natural Amenities, Population Changes, and Recreation Destinations

ANY STUDY OF RECREATION WITHIN THE STATE OF WISCONSIN WILL NECESSARILY INVOLVE AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE STATE'S CHANGING DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND SHIFTING NATURAL LANDSCAPES. PEOPLE'S LIFESTYLES—WHERE THEY LIVE, THEIR INCOME, THEIR AGE, THEIR LEVEL OF EDUCATION, THEIR CULTURAL BACKGROUND—INFLUENCE, AT LEAST TO SOME EXTENT, THE TYPES OF RECREATION IN WHICH THEY PARTICIPATE. AS ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL FACTORS DIFFER ACROSS THE STATE, SO TOO DOES THE SUPPLY AND DEMAND FOR DIFFERENT FORMS OF RECREATION. THIS CHAPTER EXPLORES HOW CHANGES IN URBANIZATION, HOUSING, AND POPULATION AFFECT RECREATION WITHIN WISCONSIN.





Wisconsin is a state characterized by a wide variety of different landscapes. From the coastal shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior to the southern lowland prairies and marshes, and northern forests of pine and hardwoods, the Wisconsin landscape offers something for nearly every recreation interest and activity.

General Land Cover

Wisconsin is a state characterized by a wide variety of different landscapes. From the coastal shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Superior to the southern lowland prairies and marshes, and northern forests of pine and hardwoods, the Wisconsin landscape offers something for nearly every recreation interest and activity. Researchers Calvin Beale, and Ken Johnson, and researcher David McGranahan have found evidence that natural amenities—climate, topography, forests, lakes, and rivers—and recreational resources are associated with population growth in some rural areas. According to this research, the natural landscape of a particularly beautiful and recreation-rich area will attract a larger number of residents and visitors than other areas. Following this line of thought, one would expect amenity and recreation-rich areas to experience disproportionately high population and housing growth.

We can get an idea of what the capacity for such amenity-based growth might be in Wisconsin by looking at land cover. Table 1-1 shows land cover type by SCORP regions as it existed in 1992. Land cover of an area determines how that area may be used recreationally according to what types of recreation a particular environment supports. In this respect, urban environments generally support only developed, urban forms of recreation—basketball courts, sidewalks, city parks, etc. Less developed areas, on the other hand, may be used for a wider variety of recreation depending on the type of land cover present. Heavily forested or grassland regions, for example, support activities such as hiking, trail-riding, and cross-country skiing while regions with many lakes and rivers support more water sports such as speed boating, waterskiing, canoeing, swimming, etc.

Table 1-1: Land Cover by SCORP Region, 1992

SCORP Region	Urban	Agricultural	Grassland	Forest	Water	Wetland	Other
Great Northwest	0.4%	8.6%	11.1%	57.1%	4.0%	15.8%	3.0%
Northwoods	0.3%	5.6%	5.1%	58.4%	4.9%	22.9%	2.7%
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	1.5%	40.9%	5.6%	31.2%	1.4%	17.8%	1.5%
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	9.8%	46.3%	15.3%	11.8%	2.6%	10.4%	3.6%
Southern Gateways	2.1%	56.3%	12.2%	18.9%	2.0%	7.6%	1.0%
Mississippi River Corridor	0.9%	40.7%	14.6%	35.7%	2.8%	4.8%	0.6%
Western Sands	1.1%	29.9%	12.9%	37.2%	2.4%	14.2%	2.3%
Lake Winnebago Waters	1.7%	45.1%	9.5%	19.5%	6.0%	17.1%	1.1%
Wisconsin State Total	1.6%	30.8%	10.7%	37.5%	3.4%	14.1%	2.0%

Source: University of Wisconsin Applied Population Lab and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Table 1-2: Wisconsin Population Projections

SCORP Region	Estimate	Projected Population		Projected Increase		Average Annual % Increase	
	2004	2010	2020	2004–2010	2010–2020	2004–2010	2010–2020
Great Northwest	232,361	239,057	249,481	6,696	10,424	0.48%	0.44%
Northwoods	169,376	170,777	173,816	1,401	3,039	0.14%	0.18%
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	453,962	470,518	501,198	16,556	30,680	0.61%	0.65%
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	2,081,878	2,159,531	2,282,032	77,653	122,501	0.62%	0.57%
Southern Gateways	979,295	1,026,728	1,106,156	47,433	79,428	0.81%	0.77%
Mississippi River Corridor	408,837	427,977	459,717	19,140	31,740	0.78%	0.74%
Western Sands	573,665	595,455	630,246	21,790	34,791	0.63%	0.58%
Lake Winnebago Waters	633,581	661,427	708,232	27,846	46,805	0.73%	0.71%
Wisconsin State Total	5,532,955	5,751,470	6,110,878	218,515	359,408	0.66%	0.62%

Source: Wisconsin Dept. of Administration (2004)

Wetlands represent a particularly important ecosystem within the Wisconsin landscape. Beyond the important habitat they provide for many rare, endangered, and threatened plant and animal species, wetlands also serve many functional roles, acting as flooding buffers, as watershed filtration systems, and as important stopover points for migrating birds. Wetlands also provide important recreational opportunities such as wildlife viewing. Though many wetlands still exist within the state, these ecosystems are threatened by increasing urban and suburban development and pollution. Wisconsinites value their wetlands; wetland protection and restoration programs have become increasingly popular among state residents. As more citizens become involved, the state and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources hope to preserve and restore as many of these areas as possible. For more information on wetlands, please see Appendix E—Wetlands Summary.

Population Changes

Population Growth

Over the past several decades Wisconsin's population has increased dramatically. In the 50 years between 1950 and 2000, the state gained 2,098,380 residents, an increase of 61%. Population growth continues today, with populations projected to hit 5,751,470 by 2010 and 6,110,878 by 2020. Table 1-2 outlines the projected population changes within each SCORP region. As we can see, growth is not expected to occur uniformly across the state. Urban regions, particularly Southern Gateways and Lake Winnebago Waters, are expected to experience higher population growth than more rural regions. As populations continue to grow, the recreational profile of a given region would also be expected to change. Larger populations generally support a larger supply of recreational opportunities, more people participating in a more diverse range of activities. For this reason, a larger population will also require a larger pool of potential recreational activities and facilities.



As populations continue to grow and age, the recreational profile of a given region would also be expected to change.

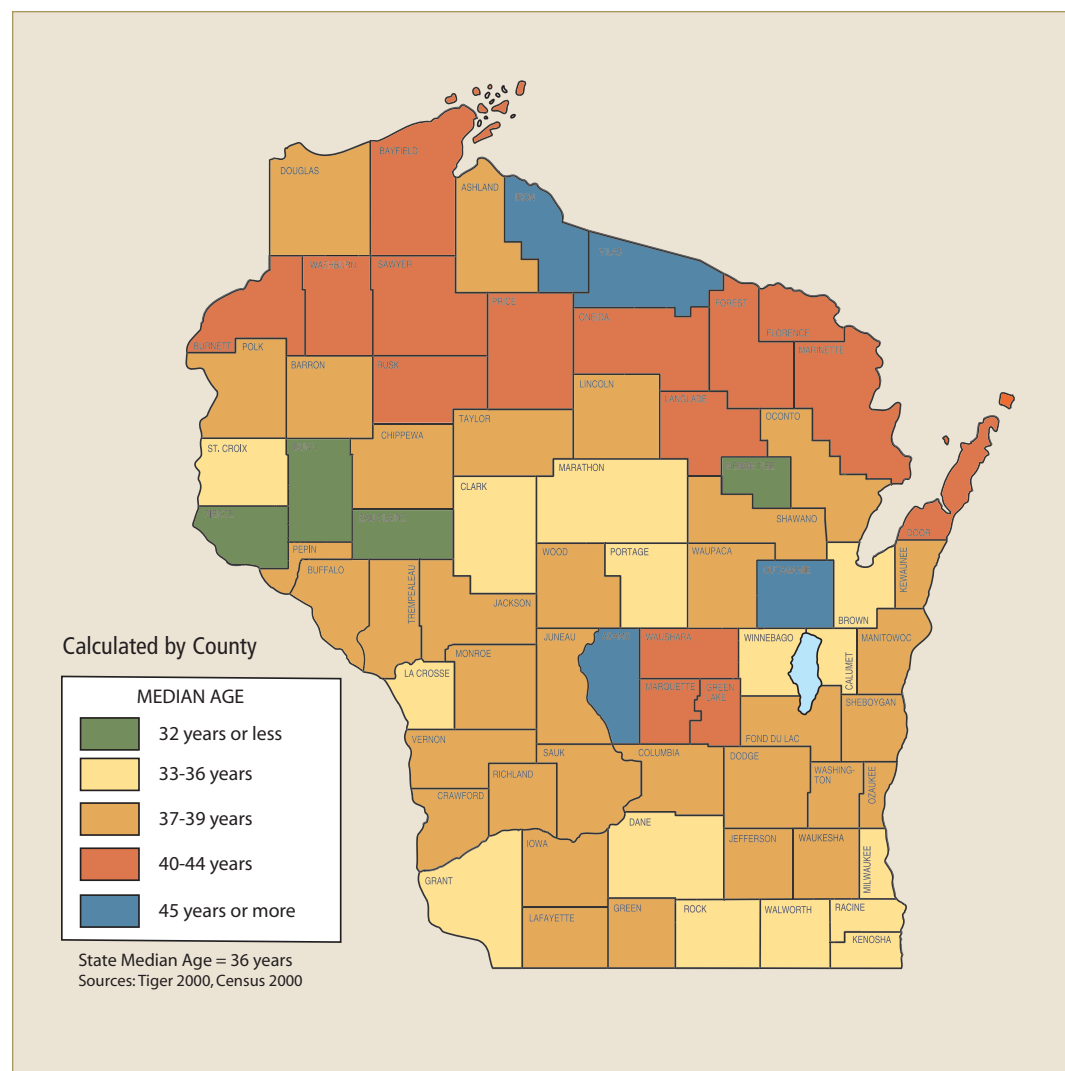
Age Structure

As Wisconsin's population is increasing, it is also aging. In a trend known as the demographic transition, average life expectancy has increased as birth rates have declined. As a result, populations within the state have become markedly older than in previous generations. Aging across the state, however, has not been uniform. Populations in northern regions of the state are becoming older as young people migrate out and leave behind a population of primarily older residents. These same northern regions are also popular locations for retirement and, as more retirees migrate into them, the population demographics of these regions are becoming increasingly older. Other regions of the state, particularly metropolitan areas and areas around universities have populations that are relatively younger, a reflection of the higher numbers of students, young professionals, and young families that choose to live in these regions.

As Figure 1-1 indicates, northern regions of the state have higher median ages than elsewhere in the state. Aging trends are expected to continue as certain regions age quickly and overall state population ages at a more gradual rate.

Because Wisconsinites of different ages enjoy different recreation activities, the age structure of a region affects the overall recreational demand of that region. Based on data from Chapter Two, older residents generally enjoy quieter, lower impact activities such as viewing birds, driving for pleasure, ice fishing, etc. Younger generations generally participate in more high impact activities such as running, jogging, inline skating, developed camping, disc golf, downhill skiing, kayaking, paintball, mountain biking, and riding ATVs.

Figure 1-1: Wisconsin Median Age



College Education

Education levels differ across the state. Northern and central regions generally have fewer residents with a college degree, while southern and eastern regions generally have more residents with a college degree. Education levels are also generally higher in more urban areas—Dane, Ozaukee, Milwaukee, St. Croix, Pierce, Eau Claire, Portage, and La Crosse Counties—than in more rural areas—Forest, Langlade, Taylor, and Jackson Counties, among others.



Education level influences the types of recreation in which people participate.

Figure 1-2: Wisconsin Population with a Four-Year College Degree

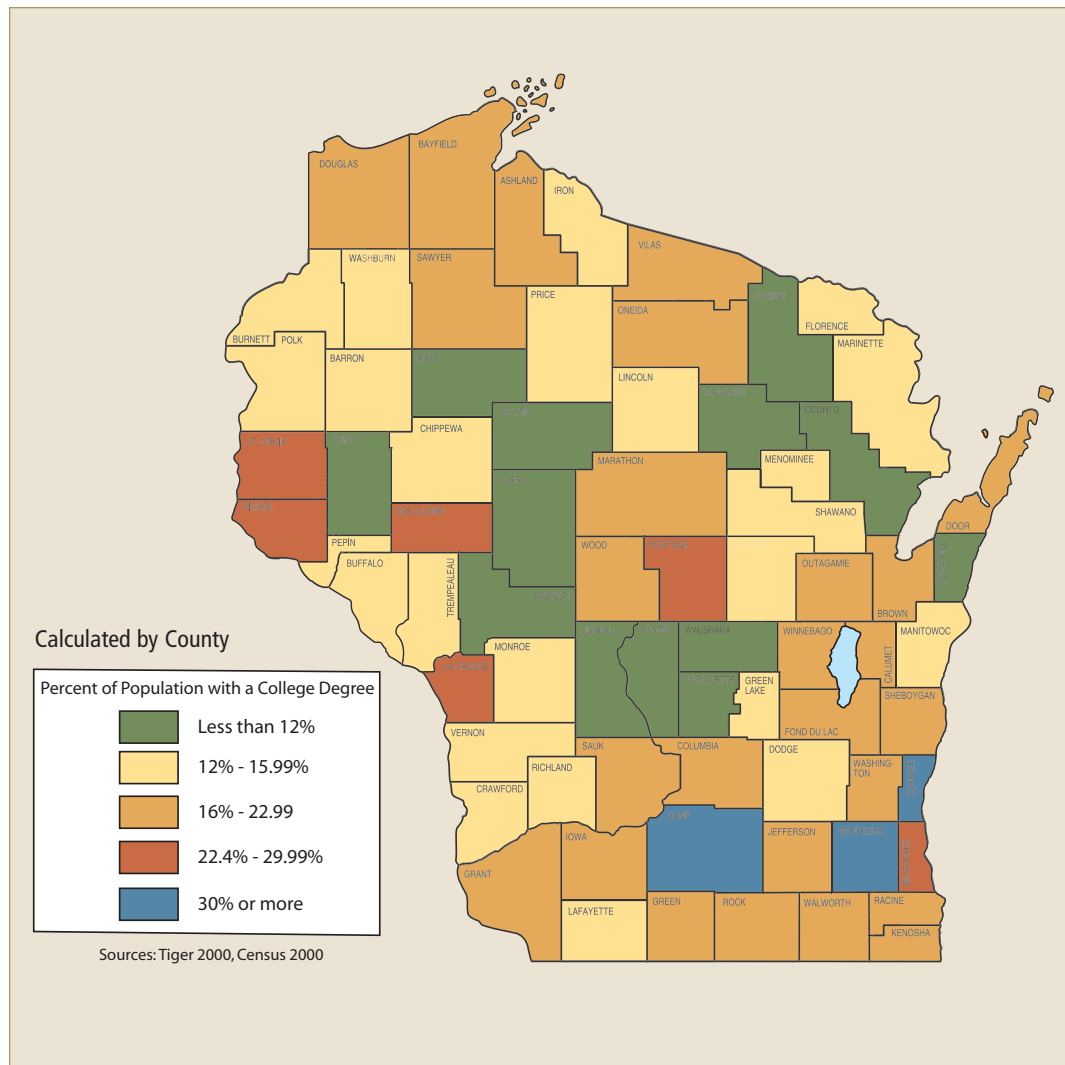


Table 1-3: **Selected Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Participation by Education (%)**

	< High School	High School	Some College	College Degree	Post-Graduate Degree
Inline Skating	42	3	24	22	9
Ice Hockey Outdoors	27	32	21	17	3
Motorcycling off-road	25	31	30	10	4
Small Game Hunting	18	40	24	13	5
Sailing	12	15	29	24	20
Scuba Diving	7	17	28	33	15

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE): Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Markets (2005)

Education level influences the types of recreation people participate in. Wisconsinites with relatively high levels of education disproportionately enjoy visiting wilderness areas, hiking, nature-based education, viewing nature and wildlife, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, sailing, canoeing, bicycling, walking for pleasure, backpacking, and swimming in lakes/streams.

Table 1-3 lists participation in selected outdoor recreation activities according to percentages of participants with different levels of education. Activities which are popular among college graduates—inline skating, sailing, scuba diving, etc.—will likely be popular in those regions of the state with a higher percentage of college graduates. Conversely, activities popular among those with a high school education—outdoor ice hockey, off-road motorcycling, small game hunting, etc.—will likely be popular in those regions of the state with fewer college graduates.

Income

Income also affects recreation demand, particularly with regard to more expensive activities. Middle income Wisconsinites often participate in developed camping, snowmobiling, fishing, picnicking, driving for pleasure, and ATV riding. People with high incomes, on the other hand, often participate in golfing, hiking, running or jogging, visiting historic sites, viewing nature and wildlife, downhill and cross-country skiing, motor-boat-riding, sailing, waterskiing, and riding personal watercraft. Table 1-4 indicates the median household income by SCORP region across Wisconsin. Incomes are generally highest in the southern portions of the state—the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal and Southern Gateways Regions. Incomes are generally lower in more northern and central portions of the state with the lowest incomes found in the Great Northwest and Northwoods Regions.

Table 1-4: **Median Household Income by Region**

SCORP Region	Median Household Income
Great Northwest	\$35,648
Northwoods	\$35,888
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	\$43,619
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	\$46,651
Southern Gateways	\$46,588
Mississippi River Corridor	\$41,406
Western Sands	\$40,553
Lake Winnebago Waters	\$44,983
Wisconsin Statewide Average	\$43,791

Source: U.S. Census Bureau (1999)



Income also affects recreation demand, particularly with regard to more expensive activities.

Ethnicity

Wisconsin's population is predominantly White/non-Hispanic (87% in 2000). However, minority populations within the state are increasing. The number of Hispanic residents in Wisconsin has grown steadily, increasing over 100% in the years 1990-2000. As Table 1-5 indicates, this growth was especially notable in the Lake Winnebago Waters, Lower Lake Michigan Coastal, Southern Gateways, and Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Regions.

Asian populations have also grown, with a statewide increase of 69% in the years 1990-2000. This growth occurred especially in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal, Western Sands, Lake Winnebago Waters, and Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Regions.

African Americans are the largest minority group in the state with 5.6% of the overall state population. Populations of African Americans are largest in the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region where almost 13% of residents are of this ethnicity.

American Indians make up 3.7% of the population in the Great Northwest Region and 2.2% of the population in the Northwoods Region.



Wisconsin's population is predominantly White/non-Hispanic. However, minority populations are steadily increasing.

Table 1-5: **Ethnicities by Region**

SCORP Region	Total Population 2000	Hispanic		Asian		African American		American Indian	
		Percent of Total 2000	Percent Increase 1990-2000	Percent of Total 2000	Percent Increase 1990-2000	Percent of Total 2000	Percent Increase 1990-2000	Percent of Total 2000	Percent Increase 1990-2000
Great Northwest	224,701	0.8%	105.1%	0.3%	28.5%	0.3%	70.9%	3.7%	18.8%
Northwoods	165,665	0.8%	140.5%	0.3%	74.7%	0.3%	58.4%	2.2%	27.2%
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	436,831	2.5%	327.9%	1.6%	85.9%	0.7%	158.5%	1.4%	31.3%
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	2,045,554	6.4%	87.0%	1.9%	69.0%	12.9%	20.0%	0.5%	3.8%
Southern Gateways	936,932	3.0%	169.2%	1.8%	65.8%	2.9%	44.6%	0.3%	29.1%
Mississippi River Corridor	389,860	0.8%	84.4%	1.3%	30.6%	0.5%	122.4%	0.3%	23.7%
Western Sands	554,700	1.1%	98.4%	2.1%	76.4%	0.4%	72.8%	0.7%	25.6%
Lake Winnebago Waters	609,432	1.9%	156.2%	1.4%	87.6%	0.7%	232.8%	1.8%	24.6%
State of Wisconsin Average	5,363,675	3.6%	107.0%	1.6%	68.7%	5.6%	24.5%	0.8%	19.9%

Source: University of Wisconsin Applied Population Lab and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (2005)

Table 1-6: **Selected Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Participation by Race (%)**

	White	African American	Hispanic	American Indian	Asian
Motorboating	97	<1	2	<1	<1
Horseback Riding	96	1	2	<1	<1
Golf	95	3	2	<1	<1
Family Gatherings	90	5	4	<1	<1
Disc Golf	90	4	3	1	2
Nature-Based Educational Programs	88	7	4	<1	<1

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE): Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Markets (2005)



Certain activities—hunting, paintball, and ice fishing, among others—are far more popular among men than among women.

Relative populations of minority individuals are important when considering the recreational demand of a given region. As Table 1-6 indicates, people of different ethnicities often enjoy different recreational activities. While the greatest majority of participants in most outdoor recreation activities are White, nature-based educational programs are popular among minority groups. Family gatherings and disc golf are also relatively popular among minorities. Given these statistics, regions with higher levels of ethnicities may be expected to show a higher demand for certain activities and facilities such as picnic shelters, disc golf courses, and nature centers.

Gender

Though gender ratios have not changed significantly within the state, gender is a consideration when determining recreational supply and demand. Table 1-7 lists participation in selected outdoor recreation activities according to the percentage of participants who are male or female. As this table indicates, certain activities—hunting, paintball, and ice fishing, among others—are far more popular among men than among women. Other activities—visiting a dog park and swimming in an outdoor pool, among others—are more popular among women than among men.

Table 1-7: **Selected Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Participation by Gender (%)**

	Male	Female
Hunting	86	14
Paintball	80	20
Ice Fishing	60	40
Hiking	51	49
Cross-Country Skiing	49	51
Swimming in an Outdoor Pool	44	56
Visit a Dog Park to Walk Pet	38	62

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE): Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Markets (2005)



Wisconsin is becoming increasingly urbanized—68% of the state population now lives in urban areas, a 10% increase over the last 50 years.

Urbanization

As Table 1-8 indicates, Wisconsin is becoming increasingly urbanized. 68% of the state population now lives in urban areas, a 10% increase over the last 50 years. Urban areas generally require different recreational facilities and activities than rural areas; urbanites often participate in activities requiring more developed facilities—visiting dog parks, swimming in an outdoor pool, playing basketball, picnicking in a city shelter. Rural residents, on the other hand, are more likely to participate in activities requiring less developed environments—snowmobiling, ice fishing, hunting, or riding an ATV. Similarly, urbanization also affects the supply of recreation within an area. More development generally means less land available for recreating. Highly urban areas, therefore, cannot support the kinds of wide-open recreating—ATV trails, backpacking, undeveloped camping, hunting, snowmobiling—that a more rural area would be able to support.

There are many different ways of evaluating urbanization trends in Wisconsin. This chapter will examine three of them: the shift from rural to urban population, the total number of housing units, and the number of houses classified as seasonal properties.

Urban/Rural Population

In 1900, Wisconsin was predominantly rural with only 38% of the population living in urban areas. By 2000, however, the majority of the population (68%) was living in urban areas, mostly in the metropolitan Southern Gateways and Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Regions. Meanwhile, the more northern regions of the Northwoods and Great Northwest had only 7% of over-all state populations.

Table 1-8: **Urbanization in Wisconsin SCORP Regions, 1950–2000**

SCORP Region	Percent Living in Urban Areas					
	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Great Northwest	31.7%	31.0%	30.0%	26.7%	26.4%	25.1%
Northwoods	30.5%	32.2%	28.8%	24.8%	24.2%	23.1%
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	52.8%	59.8%	63.1%	61.6%	63.4%	63.5%
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	81.6%	86.2%	86.6%	84.9%	85.6%	89.4%
Southern Gateways	50.8%	56.3%	60.4%	61.6%	63.7%	67.6%
Mississippi River Corridor	31.5%	33.6%	37.1%	38.0%	42.1%	44.8%
Western Sands	39.1%	42.1%	44.2%	45.2%	47.9%	51.5%
Lake Winnebago Waters	48.2%	52.7%	56.6%	56.2%	58.3%	60.5%
State of Wisconsin	57.9%	63.8%	65.9%	64.2%	65.7%	68.3%

Source: University of Wisconsin Applied Population Lab and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (2005)

Table 1-9: **Selected Wisconsin Outdoor Recreation Participation by Urban/Suburban/Rural Populations (%)**

	Urban	Suburban	Rural
Swimming in an Outdoor Pool	41	35	23
Running or Jogging	32	26	17
Driving ATVs Off-Road	20	32	29
Target Shooting	17	27	22

Source: National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE): Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Markets (2005)

As populations become increasingly urban, one would expect a higher demand for more urban-based activities—developed parks, ice rinks, outdoor pools, etc. Larger, more concentrated urban populations may also support a wider range of recreation activities as a larger population participates in a greater diversity of activities. Table 1-9 lists participation in several selected activities according to percentages of participants who live in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Swimming in an outdoor pool and running/jogging are more popular among urban residents than they are among suburban or rural residents. Driving ATVs off-road and target shooting—both activities requiring large areas of undeveloped land—are more popular among suburban and rural residents than urban residents.

Housing Units

As Wisconsin's population has grown, so too has its housing market. The rate of housing growth—growing at a rate of 133% over the past 54 years—has far eclipsed the rate of population growth. As Table 1-10 illustrates, the number of housing units within Wisconsin has increased from 1,055,843 in 1950 to 2,462,735 in 2004. This rapid increase reflects the rising numbers of single-person and small-family households as well as the increased popularity of seasonal housing. Housing development, particularly in the Northwoods and Great Northwest Regions, was highest during the 1970s and has since leveled off. More recently, development has occurred most rapidly in the Southern Gateways, Mississippi River Corridor, and Lake Winnebago Waters Regions, a reflection of the higher rates of suburban development within these regions.

Table 1-10: **Wisconsin Housing Units, 1950–2004**

SCORP Region	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2004*
Great Northwest	68,648	74,119	79,021	108,267	120,325	127,704	135,797
Northwoods	48,392	57,768	64,544	95,224	102,462	111,328	116,860
Upper Lake Michigan Coastal	82,193	100,082	114,710	154,268	176,646	198,730	213,376
Lower Lake Michigan Coastal	402,104	528,825	597,965	702,285	757,870	842,681	877,455
Southern Gateways	154,026	188,944	229,586	296,803	330,772	391,626	423,288
Mississippi River Corridor	80,940	87,278	95,159	123,659	136,743	157,966	170,990
Western Sands	106,801	119,783	137,457	186,136	207,794	233,660	249,055
Lake Winnebago Waters	112,739	131,821	153,878	197,215	223,162	257,449	275,914
State of Wisconsin Average	1,055,843	1,288,620	1,472,320	1,863,857	2,055,774	2,321,144	2,462,735

*estimate from Wisconsin Dept. of Administration

Sources: Census (1950-2000), Wisconsin Dept. of Administration (2004)

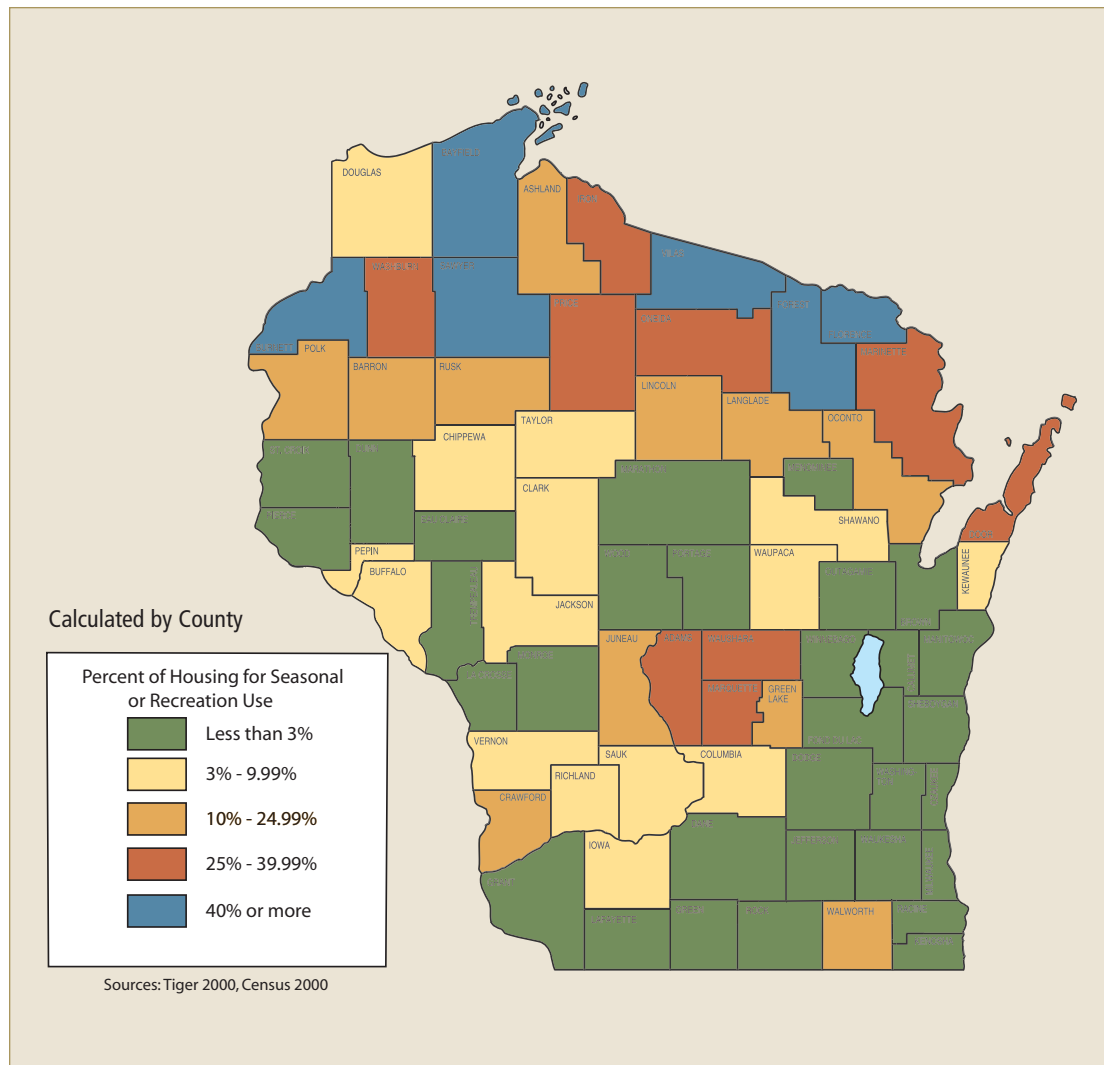
Seasonal Housing

Seasonal housing has long been an important factor in Wisconsin outdoor recreation. In general, a region with a larger number of seasonal units has higher levels of participation in recreation activities as seasonal residents flock to these regions for vacations. Not only does seasonal housing increase the number of visitors to a region, it also affects recreational supply by decreasing the amount of land available for recreation.

In Wisconsin, the number of seasonal housing units has increased dramatically from a relatively low 56,964 units in 1950 to 150,601 in 1990, a growth rate of 164%. Figure 1-3 depicts seasonal housing as it exists across the state. Although present in each region, seasonal housing is especially prevalent in more northern regions of the state. In Burnett, Bayfield, Sawyer, Vilas, Florence,

and Forest Counties—all northern counties—over 40% of all housing is seasonal housing. Continued seasonal housing development in these and other regions of Wisconsin will generate a higher demand for recreation while at the same time limiting the supply of recreation in once undeveloped areas.

Figure 1-3: Wisconsin Seasonal Housing



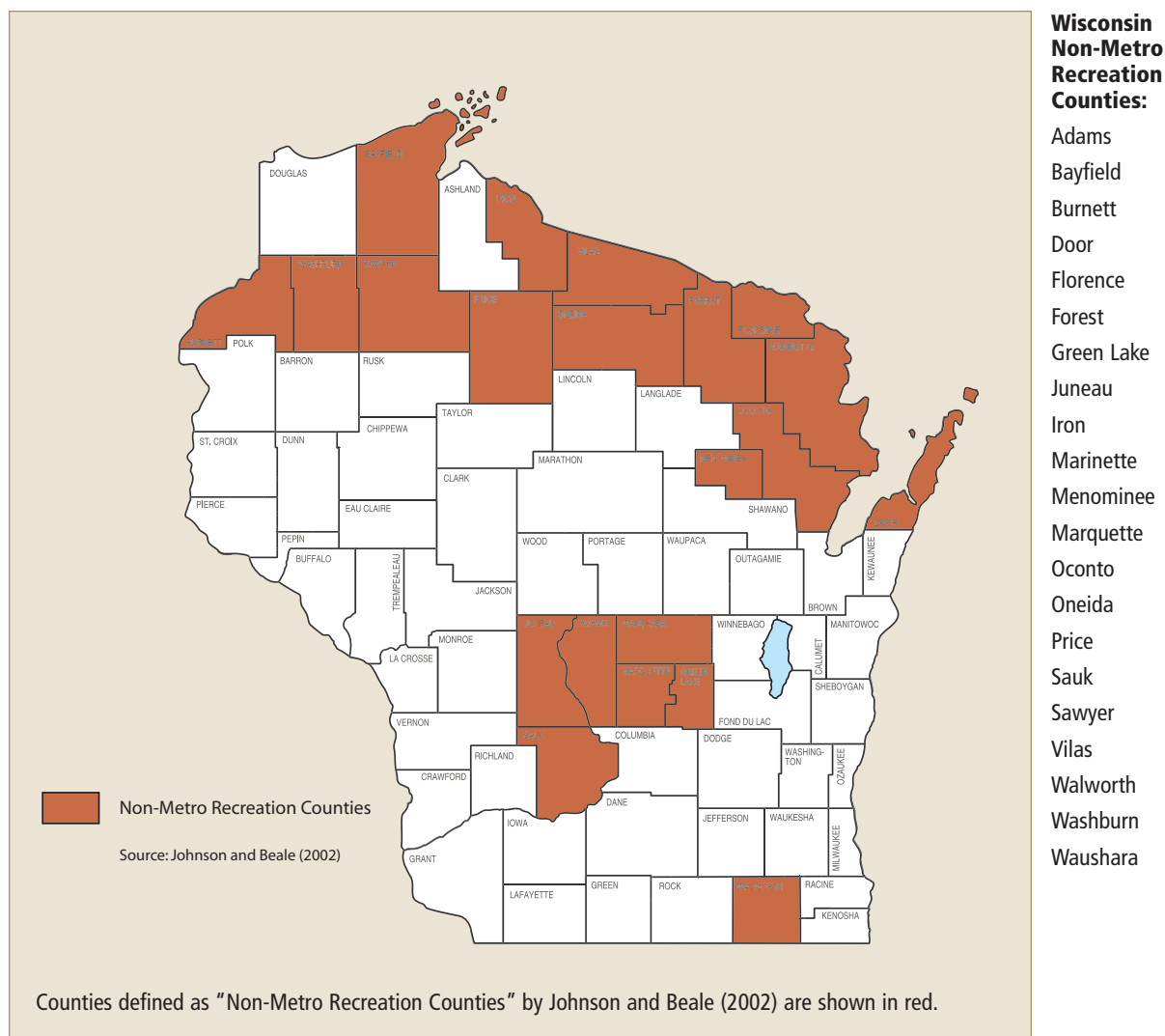
Non-Metro Recreation Counties

A recent research study (Johnson and Beale, 2002) classified Wisconsin counties according to their dominant characteristics. One type of county they identified is the so-called “Non-Metro Recreation County.” This type of county is characterized by high levels of tourism, recreation, entertainment, and seasonal housing. These counties are, by definition, rural with large amounts of undeveloped land available for recreational use and/or development. In addition, natural amenities such as clean lakes, large forested areas, and recreational facilities (campgrounds for example) play to this idea of Non-Metro Recreation Counties. Figure 1-4 illustrates the location of Non-Metro Recreation Counties across the state. Because of their proximity to Lake Michigan and their abundance of seasonal housing, most Non-Metro Recreation Counties in Wisconsin are located in the

northern part of the state with a smaller portion located in central Wisconsin.

Non-Metro Recreation Counties are generally considered to be vacation destinations and are therefore important to the overall state economy. Yet these counties have value beyond what they provide in tourist dollars. As natural amenity-rich areas they provide large areas of land for outdoor recreating, land that is important in an ever-developing statewide landscape.

Figure 1-4: **Non-Metro Recreation Counties**





Non-Metro Recreation Counties have value beyond what they provide in tourist dollars. As natural amenity-rich areas they provide large areas of land for outdoor recreating, land that is important in an ever-developing statewide landscape.

Non-Metro Recreation Counties have experienced especially high net migration rates and higher population growth rates than either Metro Counties or other Non-Metro Counties (Johnson and Beale, 2002). In Wisconsin the population of Non-Metro Recreation Counties has grown at a rate of 1.9% per year, as compared to a Metro growth rate of 1.7% per year. The rate of housing development in Non-Metro Recreation Counties is also higher than in either other Non-Metro Counties or Metro Counties. In the period from 2000-2004, Non-Metro Recreation Counties experienced a 7% increase in the number of housing units. During this same period, other Non-Metro Counties experienced a 5.6% growth in housing units and Metro Counties experienced a 6.1% growth in housing units (see Table 1-11).

Table 1-11: **Housing and Population Changes in Non-Metro Recreation and Non-Recreation Counties**

	Number of Counties	Population Change			Housing Change		
		1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004	1970-1990	1990-2000	2000-2004
Non-Metro Recreation Counties	21	23.7%	15.3%	4.3%	64.3%	9.9%	7.0%
Other Non-Metro Counties	31	10.1%	8.5%	2.8%	37.0%	11.9%	5.6%
Metro Counties	20	9.4%	9.3%	3.1%	36.0%	13.9%	6.1%

Sources: Census (1950-2000), Wisconsin Dept. of Administration (2004)

Summary

Wisconsin's SCORP Regions are diverse ecologically, demographically, and socio-economically. The majority of the state's population is concentrated in a small number of metropolitan areas, areas which also have the highest levels of income, education, and property values. While its population may live predominantly in a select few areas, the majority of the state's land remains mostly rural and sparsely populated. In general, the southern and eastern parts of the state, especially the Lower Lake Michigan Coastal Region, are highly urbanized and have relatively high levels of income, education, and property values. Other SCORP regions (except for the Great Northwest and the Northwoods which remain rural without large population centers) have at least one highly populated, and urban county surrounded by more rural counties.

The northern part of the state can be characterized as being heavily impacted by seasonal housing and tourism and as having a rapidly aging resident population. Seasonal housing and tourism are also important considerations in many rural areas of the state where full-time residents may represent a small portion of overall recreation demand. This is especially true in the Northwoods, Great Northwest, and Upper Lake Michigan Coastal Regions.

Population growth and housing development have occurred relatively quickly in several areas of the state, particularly suburban counties and Non-Metro Recreation Counties. This growth is expected to continue as population growth and housing development continue to occur rapidly.



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